



Guest speaker Tony McCusker at the Christmas luncheon.



Peter and Helen White at the Christmas luncheon.



Alan Wilkinson and Alan Swinstead at the Christmas luncheon.



Bill and Margaret Ross at the Christmas luncheon.



Barry Quin, David Borg and Jim Boncaut at the Christmas luncheon.

Quarterdeck

Neville sends his apologies that he made an error with the caption for the cover photograph in the December issue. It showed *Santana II* and *Sunburst* on Opening Day, 1993, with the Clubhouse and Quarterdeck in the background.

The Easter Regatta to Port Vincent is the only event in which we cruise as a Squadron, with a strong tradition of an active racing program. *Quarterdeck* has heard that this year the format may be changed. Details will be published after this issue has gone to press.

Several readers made contact on the origin of freezing balls off brass monkey. There was agreement that the allusion is to cannon balls, but nobody produced a relevant quotation suitable for dispatch to *Oxford English Dictionary*. One claimed that it was "a common saying in the days of the Great Spanish Armada." He wrote that the monkey was "a brass or sometimes copper strip of metal, forged into either a triangular shape or square and fitted to the wooden deck." Unfortunately he provided no written evidence to support either of these statements, and it's odd that this usage of "monkey" escaped the lexicographer's eye. In that ultimate authority the usage of monkey for a cannon is endorsed "obsolete". The citations are: "1650 Art. Rendition Edinb. Castle 4, 28 Short Brasse Munkeys alias Dogs. 10 Iron Munkeys; and 1663 Flagellum, or O. Cromwell (1672) 103 Twenty-eight Brass Drakes called Monkeys."

It seems that the cannon balls were stacked in pyramids (like snooker balls) or piled up inside squares, oblongs or rings. In freezing weather they either became unusable or tumbled out of control as the metal contracted. The image must have survived for centuries in verbal slang. The citations for the phrase are: "1928 Amer. Speech IV. 123 Cold enough to freeze the tail off a brass monkey; 1937 Partridge Dict. Slang 528/2 Cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey; 1972 Evening Telegram (St. John's, Newfoundland) 5 Aug. 3/1 Here's Smallwood still putting up a brass-monkey face right to the bitter end; and 1973 Guardian 20 July 9 (headline) Brass monkey weather."

Dictionaries demand a published source, so we will send all this to *OED* and to *Macquarie*, together with "potwacher" and "telltale" (as used in sailing), neither of which appears in the latest editions.

"Monkey" has other nautical usages. One is "A machine consisting of a heavy hammer or ram working vertically in a groove and used in anchor-making and in driving bolts and piles. Also applied to the ram itself and to the hook by which it is raised." The two oldest citations are, "1750 T. R. Blanckley Nav. Expositor, Monkey, a Block made of Iron with a Catch, made use of in Ginns for driving Piles. 1794 Rigging & Seamanship I. 80 The Monkey is a machine for setting the arms, &c. It consists of a weight of about 200 lb., and a long iron shank suspended by an iron chain to a crane." A member telephoned to say that the term is still used by sheep men for a component of the wool press, but *Macquarie* makes no reference to this. In military use it is "The instrument which drives a rocket." It was also "Short for monkey-block. 1833 Marryat P. Simple vi, 'What blocks have we below?' I have a couple of monkeys down in the store-room." ("monkey-block, 'a small single block strapped with a swivel; also, those nailed on the topsail-yards of some merchantmen, to lead the buntlines through' — Smyth *Sailor's Word-book*. 1869). It has been "Applied to various receptacles for liquor," and for the hod to carry bricks. We did not know of the Australian usage, "A monkey or monkey-strap, a looped strap on the offside of a saddle pommel, used by inferior 'rough-riders'." (That citation is from Baker's *Australian Language* of 1945.) The slang term for £500 dates from 1833, and there is a quotation from a Brisbane paper of 1972 to apply it to A\$500. There are many combination words, of which only a couple will be cited. "Monkey-engine, a form of pile-driver having a monkey or ram moving in a wooden frame (Knight Dict. Mech. 1875)"; and "monkey-gaff ? U.S., a small gaff on some large merchant-vessels, placed above the spanker-gaff".

The September cover prompted John Smith to write, "Is it possible for the members who were active in 1940 to write to the *Quarterly* telling us